



Democratic Services

Location: Phase II
Ext: 0692
DDI: 01895 250692
CMD No: 736

**To: COUNCILLOR EDDIE LAVERY
CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES**

c.c. All Members of the Residents' Services Select Committee
c.c. Rod Smith – Place Directorate
c.c. Perry Scott – Corporate Director of Place

Date: 10 March 2023

Non-Key Decision request

Form D

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Dear Cabinet Member

Attached is a report requesting that a decision be made by you as an individual Cabinet Member. Democratic Services confirm that this is not a key decision, as such, the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 notice period does not apply.

You should take a decision **on or after Monday 20 March 2023** in order to meet Constitutional requirements about publication of decisions that are to be made. You may wish to discuss the report with the Corporate Director before it is made. Please indicate your decision on the duplicate memo supplied, and return it to me when you have made your decision. I will then arrange for the formal notice of decision to be published.

Ryan Dell
Democratic Services Officer

Title of Report: Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy

Decision made:

Reasons for your decision: (e.g. as stated in report)

Alternatives considered and rejected: (e.g. as stated in report)

Signed Date.....

Cabinet Member for Residents' Services

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Cabinet Member	Councillor Eddie Lavery
Cabinet Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Residents' Services
Officer Contact	Rod Smith – Place Directorate
Papers with report	Appendix 1 – Draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy Appendix 2 - Draft Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy Appendix 3 - Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26

HEADLINES

Summary	Background to the development and proposed adoption of a Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy to meet the expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing.
Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026	This report supports our ambition for residents/ the Council of: Live in good quality, affordable homes in connected communities This report supports our commitments to residents of: A Digital-Enabled, Modern, Well-Run Council Housing Strategy
Financial Cost	The costs associated with the delivery of the proposed Strategy are contained within the existing HRA budgets.
Relevant Select Committee	Residents' Services Select Committee.
Relevant Ward	All Wards.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services agrees to the adoption of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and the Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy.

Reasons for recommendation

A documented Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy provides the basis for seeking views from the landlord service customer base and meets the Regulator of Social Housing's expectations in connection with 'having your voice heard by your landlord'. Under the Building Safety Act 2022 the Council, in its capacity as building owner and manager, must bring forward a residents' engagement strategy in connection with its tower block portfolio ['higher risk and

complex buildings'] that promotes the participation of residents in the decision-making process about building safety risks.

Alternative options considered/ risk management

As a Regulated Service and the owner and manager of 11 tower blocks the Council is required to have a general engagement strategy in place and a separate strategy in place for its occupied tower block portfolio.

Democratic compliance/ previous authority

Not applicable.

Select Committee comments

In June 2021, the Residents' Services Select Committee approved as its first review the topic of how to improve feedback from residents of social housing, in order to support the work of the Council's landlord function to help shape and update its approach to tenant and leaseholder engagement under the terms of the new Charter for Social Housing Residents and support the Council's regeneration workstream in the years to come. Evidence and witness testimony was obtained from Officers in September 2021 with a follow-up session with tenants and leaseholders in October 2021.

Committee Members agreed the following recommendations to Cabinet, which were agreed:

1. Note the experiences and feedback from those tenants and leaseholders who attended the witness sessions, together with those responding to surveys, and in light of the new Draft Charter for Social Housing Residents, support the need to continuously improve the quality, timeliness, and breadth of the Council's engagement with tenants and leaseholders.
2. Agree that officers develop, for approval by the Cabinet Member, an Engagement Strategy and associated 3-year Delivery Plan.
3. Request that officers work with the Corporate Communications team to raise awareness of the engagement options available to tenants and leaseholders, including through the use of the Council's social media platforms, to maximise the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to provide feedback.
4. Agree that, in order to demonstrate a continued commitment to overview and scrutiny, the Residents' Services Select Committee receive a yearly report for the duration of the service's three-year delivery plan for engagement, which provides an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions, and continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on tenant and leaseholder engagement and feedback.

In relation to the three-year delivery plan, Committee Members were keen to see:

- The engagement options to promote resident feedback and involvement at a pace and level which suits residents, and that which supports service improvement and the resolution of matters which are important to residents
- The opportunities for residents to engage via the use of digital tools as well as 'in-person' contact, understanding that engagement should be non-exclusionary, and not be limited to only digital

means but should instead provide a breadth of options to give a voice to all tenants and leaseholders. In-person contact could include the reformation of regular Senate or Assembly meetings, alongside special interest groups, or 'Community Engagement Days' held at estates or public spaces, alongside partners and other Council services (such as the Community Safety Team, Green Spaces and Anti-Social Behaviour and Environment Team), to ensure a coordinated approach to engagement, resolution of neighbourhood issues, and collation of resident feedback

- A schedule of further consultation to be carried out, to obtain feedback from a large and diverse subset of the Borough's tenants and leaseholders, with a view to adding to or revising the strategy in line with this feedback.
- In February 2023, the Residents' Services Select Committee reviewed the work which had been undertaken in bringing forward the final draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy, the Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy and the associated Action Plan. The Committee were pleased with the progress made, the consultation undertaken and the content of the final draft strategies.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

1. The Council's landlord service is entering a new period of Regulatory scrutiny as set out in the 'Charter for Social Housing Residents; Social Housing White Paper' which was published in November 2020. The government's clear intention is to make effective use of the Regulator of Social Housing to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong. Ensuring that residents in social housing have a 'voice' and are listened to is seen as key. The government, through the Regulator of Social Housing, has clear expectations regarding a 'step change in approach' which will see engagement and involvement as a 'golden thread' running through services delivered by social housing providers. To align itself with these expectations the Council has developed a 'Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement and Involvement Strategy'.
2. The Government recognises that the best landlords engage well with their residents and listens to them with respect. This also makes good business sense. Having a clear focus on what residents need from services, and using them to shape services, drives efficient and effective services. Government will expect the Regulator of Social Housing to require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can continually improve the way they engage with social housing residents. Although this does not include the Council's leaseholders, the Council have consistently included them in its emerging approaches to engagement. In the context of its Landlord Service, leaseholders represent one quarter of its customer base, and the Council recognises the value to be drawn from good landlord and tenant relationships.
3. The Government has also committed to deliver a new opportunities and empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account.
4. The Building Safety Act 2022 introduced new obligations associated with the management of 'higher risk buildings' including the requirement to prepare [and regularly review] a residents' engagement strategy to set out how tower block residents can participate in the making of building safety decisions. A building safety decision is one which is about the management of building safety risks. This strategy must include information about what

will be provided to residents about decisions relating to the management of the building, the aspects of those decisions which will be consulted upon, how views will be obtained and taken into account and how methods for promoting participation will be measured and kept under review. After preparing the residents' engagement strategy for 'higher risk buildings', the Council must provide each resident over the age of 16 with a copy.

5. Following a programme of consultation and engagement over summer and autumn 2022 the strategies are now ready for formal consideration and potential adoption. The strategies, once adopted, will be 'owned' by the Regulation and Engagement Team but delivered by the landlord service as a whole. These documents are considered to be key 'milestone' strategies and will form the backbone of the ongoing work by the landlord service to align it to the Regulator's expectations and to ensure that the voice of Council tenants and leaseholders is captured and used to shape and develop services. The strategies are not 'set in stone' but will form the basis of the Council's approach moving forward and will be expected to develop over time in partnership with tenants and leaseholders.
6. The Social Housing Regulation Bill is currently making its way through Parliament. When it receives Royal Assent it will enable the Regulator of Social Housing to start to make changes to its Standards and implement the Regulatory approach in full. In summary terms, new law will make important changes to the Regulators objectives, powers, including standards setting powers, and work with other bodies. The new Standards will underpin proactive Consumer Regulation. The new consumer standards will be outcome focused. This means that the Regulator will focus on what landlords achieve but will not prescribe how they should do it. Subject to the passage of the Bill, the Regulator will start to consult on the new Standards by Summer 2023. In the interim the RSH has set out in broad terms the anticipated scope of the proposed themes within the consumer standards. This includes 'engagement and accountability'. Put simply, landlords that listen to tenants and take their views into account will deliver better outcomes for tenants. Landlords will need to consider how best to engage with their tenants and to really understand their feedback, so that tenants can influence decision making and meaningfully influence the services they receive. What works well at one moment in time will not necessarily be appropriate in the future or in every circumstance. The Regulator's work will look at the role of tenants in shaping the ongoing improvement of how their landlords engage with them.

Financial Implications

This report recommends the adoption of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and the Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy for the HRA service.

The costs associated with the delivery of the proposed strategies are expected to be contained within the existing HRA budgets.

However, the strategies are not 'set in stone' but will form the basis of the Council's approach moving forward and will be expected to develop over time in partnership with tenants and leaseholders and be considered as part of future MTFF and budget setting processes.

RESIDENT BENEFIT and CONSULTATION

The proposed adoption of a Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and a Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy will have a direct impact on tenants and leaseholders living in the Council's managed housing portfolio. This will benefit the Council's tenants and leaseholders by clearly setting out to them the full spectrum of involvement and engagement opportunities available to them which will improve transparency and help to shape and improve the landlord services they receive.

Consultation carried out or required

Consultation was scheduled to run from July to September 2022. However, this was extended until October 2022 due to potential conflict with the Council's consultation programme linked to its wider engagement strategy. Tenants and leaseholders were contacted from databases held by the Customer Engagement Team. Approximately 5000 residents were directly contacted. A total of 344 responses were received during the consultation exercise. 69% were from tenants and 30% from leaseholders. Leaseholders comprise approximately 24% of the customer base within the landlord service.

Consultation was carried out in a variety of ways to ensure a wide range of residents and their views were captured. This included:

- Face to face contact, both on estates and at planned events
- Telephone contact
- Email contact
- Via the Council website
- Advertising via social media, including Facebook and Twitter
- Posters displayed in libraries encouraging feedback
- Briefing colleagues across the landlord service

Alongside the specific questions asked about the strategies, residents were asked if there were any additional related comments they would like to make. A summary of responses is set out below:

- Over 98% of respondents agreed or partially agreed with the Council's approach set out in the draft engagement strategy.
- 100% of residents who live in tower blocks that responded agreed or partially agreed with the draft higher risk and complex buildings engagement strategy. Of these residents, 97% were aware of the importance of fire safety in their home.
- 10% of respondents who live in tower blocks were interested in receiving more information on fire safety or attending one of the fire safety engagement sessions run in partnership with London Fire Brigade, the Metropolitan Police and the Tenancy Management Team.
- 77% of respondents living in tower blocks are interested in getting involved in activities or focus groups relating to their building.

The extracts below relate to feedback from residents on whether the Council had missed anything out of the draft strategy that they would like included:

- More face-to-face contact or visits to estates so the Council is more visible.
- Concerns over residents who were unable to engage online and relied upon face to face or telephone contact.

- More detail on what types of engagement would actually take place and when.
- Information on who from the Council would be carrying out the engagement and how much it would cost.
- Some residents felt the strategy was good but voiced a lack of faith in the Council due to previous poor experience.

The overall consultation response to the draft strategies was positive and supports the proposed hierarchy of involvement.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance have reviewed this report and note that there are no direct financial implications associated with the adoption of the strategies, however, any financial impacts that arise from their adoption will be considered in future iterations of the Council's budget strategy.

Legal

As stated in the report, section 105 of the Housing Act 1985 requires the Council to maintain consultation arrangements with its tenants and section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 requires consultation with leaseholders in respect of service charges and leasehold matters. In addition, section 91 of the Building Safety Act 2022 requires the Council to maintain a resident engagement strategy for those residing in its high-rise buildings.

Legal Services confirm that by adopting the consultation arrangements set out in the appendices, the Council will continue to meet its legal obligations under all legislation.

Property

N/A.

Comments from other relevant service areas

N/A.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

TITLE OF ANY APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy

Appendix 2 - Draft Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy

Appendix 3 - Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26

DRAFT Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy



Contents	Page
Introduction.....	3
The results we want to achieve.....	3
Performance monitoring and evaluation.....	3
National Context.....	3
Local Context.....	4
Inclusive involvement.....	5
Resources.....	6
Financial resources.....	6
Staffing resources.....	7
Priorities.....	7
Our new approach to resident engagement.....	8
The six standards.....	9-11

Introduction

This draft tenant and leaseholder (resident) engagement strategy covers the period 2022 to 2025. It has been developed in partnership with residents and staff and sets out a new approach to resident engagement in the Borough. It ensures that there is a 'golden thread' of engagement and involvement running through the services we deliver to our residents and communities, from our Councillors to our frontline staff.

This strategy underpins our commitment to use resident engagement to improve our services by placing the 'resident voice' at the heart of what we do and enabling staff to 'hear' those voices by working in partnership with residents to share power and influence change.

The results we want to achieve

Housing is important to people and their quality of life.

It's essential that we understand residents' views to help to shape and improve housing conditions and services. We want to make sure that residents really:

- know the different ways they can become involved
- can take part and influence decisions
- have the support and resources they need to take part
- can help to improve and deliver quality services

Performance monitoring and evaluation

Progress will be measured by monitoring and evaluating:

- residents' understanding of the ways they can take part and influence decisions
- the support and resources provided for residents to take part, and
- resident satisfaction with services provided by analysing survey results

The Residents' Services Select Committee will receive an annual report for this three-year strategy for engagement, which will provide an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions, and continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on resident engagement and feedback.

National Context

Under section 105 of the Housing Act 1985, the Council has a legal obligation to consult with its secure tenants on matters of housing management such as changes to the management, maintenance, improvement or demolition of homes let by them, or changes in the provision of amenities.

Under section 20 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 as amended, the Council also has a legal obligation to consult with leaseholders regarding certain qualifying works and services where the Council intends to pass on the cost of works and services to leaseholders under the terms of their leases. These legal obligations should be seen as a statutory minimum. The new Charter for Social Housing covers seven outcomes that social housing tenants should expect from their landlords:

1. ***To be safe in your home.*** We will work with industry and landlords to ensure every home is safe and secure.
2. ***To know how your landlord is performing,*** including on repairs, complaints and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
3. ***To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly,*** with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.

4. *To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for tenants.*
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord**, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board. The Government will provide help, if you want it, to give you the tools to ensure your landlord listens.
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in**, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership**, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

In addition, the Housing Ombudsman plays a vital role in providing support to residents when things don't go quite to plan. It resolves disputes involving the tenants and leaseholders of social landlords (housing associations and local authorities) and their landlords. It is mandatory for all local authorities and registered social housing providers to be members of the Ombudsman Scheme. Residents and landlords can contact the Ombudsman at any time for support in helping to resolve a dispute. Its service is funded through annual landlord subscription fees. Hillingdon Council is a Member of the Ombudsman Scheme.

Local Context

LB Hillingdon Council currently has circa 10,100 homes classified as social housing, with a further 3,200 long leaseholders making a total of 13,300 properties in management. These numbers have remained steady in recent years as the Council has acquired or developed new accommodation to offset 'Right to Buy' sales. Hillingdon is situated in west London and borders Harrow, Ealing and Hounslow.



Inclusive Involvement

The equality Act 2020 provides Britain with a discrimination law which protects individuals from unfair treatment and promotes a fair and more equal society. This means that the Council will aim to engage with all of our residents, in an inclusive manner promoting fairness, respect and equality for everyone. We will aim to break down barriers which have prevented people from engaging in the past. Specifically, we will:

- Consider the needs of equalities groups, proactively involving under-represented groups
- Ensure any barriers to participation are taken into consideration

- Treat people respectfully, fairly and equally across all areas of our business, and tackle discrimination and harassment in all of our activities
- Inclusive involvement underpins the objectives within the strategy, and engaging with hard-to-reach groups continues to be a priority within the service

Some groups of tenants and other residents are often under-represented in community involvement, including:

- Young people
- Refugees and ethnic minority groups
- Gypsy and travellers
- People with accessibility needs
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people
- Homeless service users
- The digitally excluded

We will build on our approach to involving under-represented groups in the next three years and we are committed to removing barriers to participation. We will do this by:

- Providing transport for residents to attend events where it is requested
- Holding meetings in venues that are accessible, convenient and secure for everyone, including people with mobility issues
- Establishing meeting times to take account of the needs and preferences of local communities
- Providing training to give tenants, residents and service users the appropriate knowledge, and provide specialist assistance as required. This training includes awareness of equality issues
- Providing Council contact numbers charged at local rates
- Providing opportunities for all residents and age groups to get involved
- Ensuring all information is provided in accordance with our accessibility policy to ensure that complex statistical information doesn't lead to non-participation
- We can also provide documents in different formats. Interpreting facilities are available, and hearing loops are available in Civic Centre meeting rooms
- Ensuring adequate funds are provided to develop the key issues agreed with tenants, residents and all service users, and considering appropriate ways of enhancing resources, including the provision of a Freepost address to eliminate postal expenditure.

Resources

The Council will provide direct and indirect funding to support resident engagement, ensuring a value for money approach. This will include direct support from Council officers as well as financial support for local resident groups and other engagement activities.

The Council will bring forward a model to support residents in identifying, prioritising and delivering works and responses to meet the needs of communities. In addition, a learning and development budget will be developed to provide training and personal development opportunities for residents so that they can engage and influence effectively.

Via the approval and adoption of the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) we will aim to ensure financial certainty for the funding of resident engagement over three-year timeframes

We have the following resources dedicated to involving our residents:

Financial resources

In partnership with residents, the Service will aim to ensure that the level of resources available meets the needs, aspirations and priorities of residents across all areas of engagement and support the delivery of the Hillingdon Engagement Charter.

The Resident Engagement budget will be ring-fenced to fund activities such as:

- Consultation exercises, such as our STAR survey
- Information for residents, such as our annual report, Hillingdon People
- Independent advice and assistance from specialists
- Training and attendance at events, for both staff and tenants
- Administration
- Tenant expenses, such as transport to events

All eligible Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) can apply to the Resident Engagement Team for an annual grant to support the development and running of their group.

They must provide information with the application, including current audited accounts, a constitution, contact details and minutes of their most recent Annual General Meeting and meetings.

The grant can be used to pay for day-to-day expenses such as postage, stationery, advertising, and travel. Additional funding can be requested and will be considered by the Resident Engagement Team.

Staffing resources

The Resident Engagement Team are dedicated to supporting and developing resident engagement across the Council's housing portfolio. Their functions include:

- Co-ordinating resident engagement
- Working with other services to enhance involvement
- Providing specialist advice within the service and to residents
- Training and developing staff and residents
- Facilitating tenant and residents meetings
- Encouraging participation with under-represented groups

Aside from this dedicated resource, various parts of the service engage with our tenants and leaseholders on a regular basis and consult on a number of topics in their specialist service areas.

Priorities

Key priorities over the term of this new Engagement Strategy will be:

- the reformation of regular meetings,
- making it easier for all residents to become involved and ensuring that they are updated on actions taken because of their feedback
- an increased focus on ways for residents to become involved locally, such as Community Engagement Days held on estates or public spaces, alongside partners and other Council services (such as the Community Safety Team, Green Spaces and Anti-Social Behaviour and Environment Team), to ensure a coordinated approach to engagement, resolution of neighbourhood issues, and collation of resident feedback
- bringing the benefits of the internet to all residents while continuing to provide traditional methods of contact for those who are not online
- developing a model to support residents in identifying, prioritising and delivering works and responses to meet the needs of communities

- clarifying and developing the role of special interest groups
- developing and strengthening resident scrutiny of services through new service improvement groups which could include, for example,
 - Business Plan Implementation Group
 - Repairs and maintenance Service
 - Communication and Information
 - Value for Money – Scrutiny Group
 - Housing Support
 - Income Collection
 - Empty Property Management
 - Estate Management

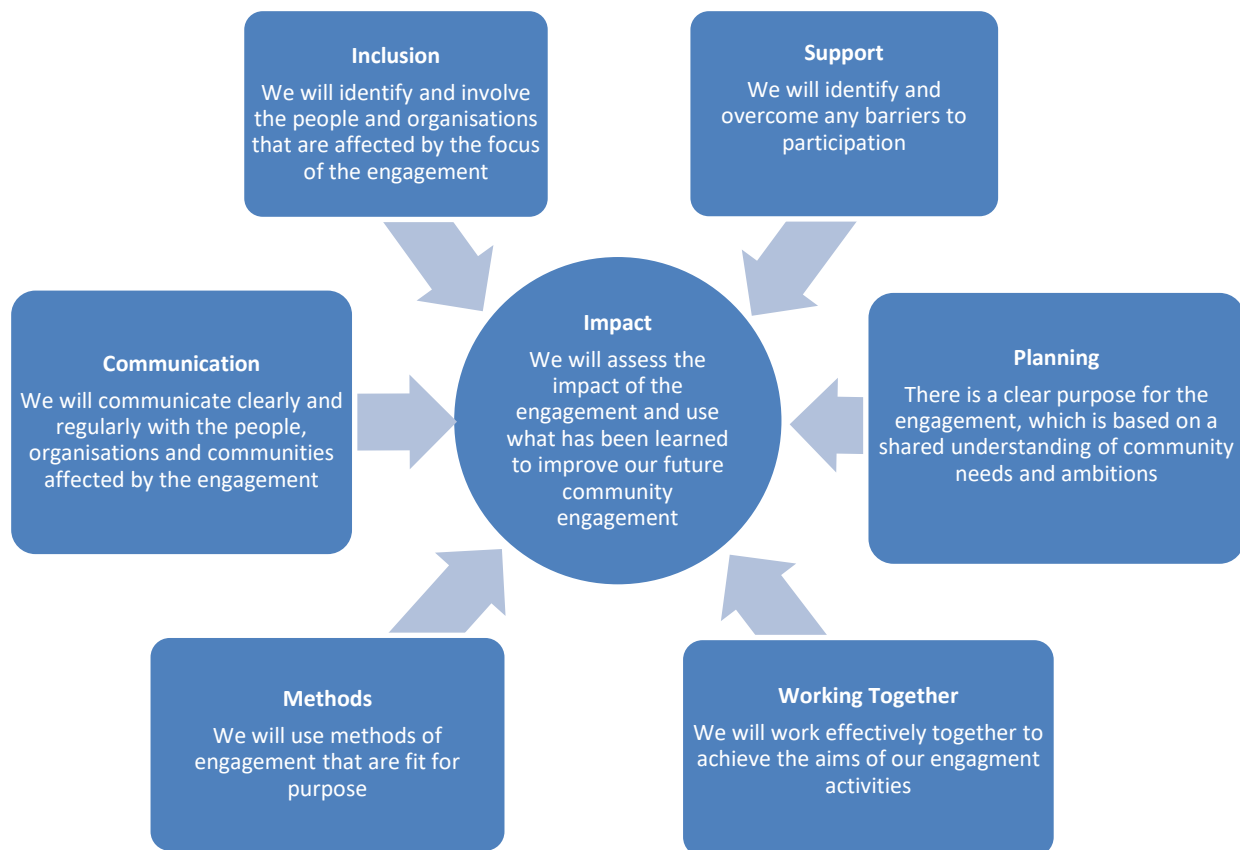
Representation on these groups allows tenants and leaseholders to impact on service delivery in real time and gain an understanding of our policies and procedures.

Our new approach to resident engagement: Developing the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC)

Our new approach to engagement will put the 'resident voice' at the heart of our service planning, improvement and delivery. We will share decision-making power with residents by creating the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) which sets out residents' expectations for service standards and our commitment to deliver these.

Our commitment in 2022 to 2025 includes a review of staff professional development and training to ensure that a refreshed culture of hearing the customer voice is rolled out across the Council. This will link to the outputs produced from the current government review of staff training and qualifications within the housing sector and the professional standards launched in 2021 by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH).

Using the model below, the Charter will focus our engagement activities on making an impact for our residents and in our communities.



The six standards that we will use to underpin our Charter are:

1. Planning: there is a clear purpose for the engagement, which is based on a shared understanding of community needs and ambitions

- Planned engagement activities will be devised and agreed fully with active residents; we will listen and act, not impose our views about what should happen
- Our engagement activities will be underpinned by our annual action plans which will set out our annual priorities for the three years of this strategy. They will be founded on the priorities of our residents in local communities, with a reference point to current national regulatory priorities
- Planning timeframes will enable genuine participation and influence by residents to occur at a pace that suits them
- Where meetings are planned, lead residents or Council staff will ensure venue accessibility and arrangements are in place in advance and that all attendees are informed beforehand

2. Working Together: we will work effectively together to achieve the aims of our engagement activities

- The Charter will establish ground rules for staff and residents about our agreed expectations of behaviour and attitudes when working together. These will be based on fairness, respect and equality

- Staff professional development and training will ensure we have skilled, committed and knowledgeable staff committed to working in partnership with tenants to achieve successful outcomes from our engagement activities
- Training will be provided for residents and could cover methods of engagement, influencing and negotiating skills, housing policies and regulatory requirements
- At the start of any engagement activities e.g. scrutiny of services, we will ensure that clear objectives, outcomes and outputs are agreed with residents
- Staff will always commit to providing feedback to residents about what happened to the views and opinions they expressed and how these have been incorporated into Council documents or ways of working

3. Methods: we will use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

- Methods will be resident-led with their preferences laying the foundations for our approaches, but we will aim to be modern, agile and responsive to meet their needs
- We will incorporate methods such as:
 - in person meetings with key staff
 - residents' associations
 - estate walkabouts where they will have greatest impact
 - digital participation e.g. social media, resident feedback
 - estate or block surgeries
 - estate or block champions
 - environmental projects
- We will gather residents' views using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter
- We will provide translation and other accessibility services on request

4. Communication: we will communicate clearly and regularly with the people, organisations and communities affected by the engagement

- Our written and verbal communication will be jargon-free
- Staff will take time to explain technical information so that residents have the time to consider it and ask questions
- Our action plan will set out our intentions for periodic communication with residents either across the Borough or by community or estate
- We will always provide contact details for lead officers involved in projects as well as the resident engagement team
- Housing staff will work with staff in other Council services to ensure their commitment to the standards of communication agreed with residents are adhered to, no matter which Council service the resident is engaging with

5. Inclusion: we will identify and involve the people and organisations that are affected by the focus of the engagement

- With specific projects such as estate improvements or regeneration we will establish early communication with those residents affected. This will be prior to any definitive plans being discussed amongst Council staff

- We commit to involving residents in estate and community issues from the project initiation stage

6. Support: we will identify and overcome any barriers to participation

- As referenced on page 2, we will ensure our engagement activities adhere to the principles of inclusive involvement, enabling all tenants and leaseholders to engage with us in the method of their choice and according to their preferences

7. Impact Assessment

Using these six standards we will assess our **Impact**.

- We will assess the impact of the engagement and use what has been learned to improve our future community engagement

On an annual basis we will complete an impact assessment of our resident engagement activities, which will include:

- Survey results and their analysis
- Transactional survey feedback from residents
- Reviewing our Hillingdon Engagement Charter and its impact
- Reporting to the Residents' Services Select Committee about how we have implemented residents' recommendations

This impact assessment will be included in the annual report to the Residents Services Select Committee.



DRAFT Higher Risk and Complex Buildings Engagement Strategy

Note

This strategy document should be read in conjunction with our **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy** which details how we will engage with residents in the Borough using the six standards of our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC). These standards underpin our Borough-wide approach to engagement and provide the foundation from which to build engagement with residents in our tower blocks, also known as 'higher risk and complex buildings'.

Preface

The Building Safety Act 2022 introduces a new regulatory system for the management of building safety in "higher risk buildings", meaning buildings of 18 metres or more in height, or seven or more storeys, containing at least two flats. The most significant of the new requirements on landlords is the creation of the new [accountable person](#) role, with the following specific responsibilities:

- They will implement a single Residents' Engagement Strategy for the whole building (this will be agreed in cooperation with the other Accountable Persons)
- They will establish and operate a system for the investigation of residents' complaints
- They will be responsible for applying for Registration and Certification for the whole building, including bringing together a single safety case report
- They will be responsible for displaying information about the most recent building assessment certificate, compliance notices and details of those responsible for managing building safety for the building
- Where a special measures order has been made, they must ensure that no building assessment certificate relating to the building is displayed in the building
- They will take the lead responsibility for coordinating the golden thread of safety information for the building, keeping the golden thread updated and ensuring it is accurate and accessible; and
- They will establish and operate a system for mandatory occurrence reporting.

Residents' engagement strategy

For the first time, it will be a statutory requirement for a resident engagement strategy to be produced for each higher risk building. The key purpose of this strategy will be for residents aged 16 and over (and non-resident owners) to be encouraged to participate in the making of building safety decisions. The strategy will need to set out:

- what information will be provided to residents
- what decisions they will be consulted on
- how residents' views will be taken into account; and
- how the appropriateness of consultation undertaken will be measured

Contents	Page
Our Strategy	5
Understanding our residents	5-6
Information to be provided to residents	6-8
Decisions that we will consult on	8
How residents' views will be heard	8-9
How we will measure the appropriateness of our consultation	9

Our Strategy

As required by the Building Safety Act, in Hillingdon we have nominated The Director of Operational Assets as the Principal Accountable Person who will be supported by a second Accountable Person, the Head of Housing Management. They are our lead officers for producing this engagement strategy, in partnership with residents, to promote their participation in the decision-making process about the building safety risks in their buildings. Every resident living in high risk and complex buildings will be provided with an accessible copy of this strategy document.

As required by the Building Safety Act, this strategy details:

- what information will be provided to residents
- what decisions they will be consulted on
- how residents' views will be taken into account; and
- how the appropriateness of consultation undertaken will be measured

Our strategy for engagement will ensure that residents understand the safety of their building that is required from the golden thread of information set out in the building safety Act. The golden thread is both:

- the information about a building that allows someone to understand a building and keep it safe, and
- the information management to ensure the information is accurate, easily understandable, can be accessed by those who need it and is up to date

We will also ensure we are meeting all requirements of the 2021 Fire Safety Act and keeping abreast of all new government publications and consultations including the consultation on emergency evacuations and information sharing between building owners and the fire and rescue services.

Understanding our residents

The success of this strategy depends on how well we know our residents living within our high rise and complex buildings. This means that we need to understand the needs of every household living within these buildings in order to prepare appropriate evacuation procedures for them, but in particular our disabled and vulnerable residents. **We will do this as a commitment to good practice, even if guidance from government does not require it.**

Our approach should be founded not on the principle of us telling our residents that they are safe, but rather about asking them if they feel safe. We should not say, "we are doing this, therefore you are safe" we must ask residents the question *"do you feel safe in your home and your building?"*

Our success also relies on us regularly repeating fire safety information and the methods we use to do this. We must also build trust with our residents by co-creating our engagement strategies with them and underpinning these with the standards of the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC).

A key priority of our action and communication plan is to conduct surveys of our residents in our high rise and complex buildings to understand the needs of their household. Residents will need

reassurance that their data is secure and being used only for building safety purposes, although it should also be used to update household tenancy records.

We will also work with other key stakeholders and trusted community partners in the Borough to ensure we hear the voices of the residents in these properties and engage successfully with them.

Our aim is that over time, each high rise or complex building in the Borough, is represented either by block champions or by residents' associations. The deployment of digital engagement tools will create new opportunities for engagement, particularly with younger tenants.

Information to be provided to residents

It is our intention that residents will have confidence in the safety of their building and will have a greater say in how their buildings are being managed through the information that we provide to them.

Our information will support our residents to understand how they can be involved in this engagement strategy. It will also tell them how they can request further information about the safety measures in place for their building from the Principal Accountable Person, where information is not already published on a dedicated section of the Council's website. We will also signpost our residents to additional information such as [fire safety](#) information available from the Housing Ombudsman and how we are meeting the requirements of the Fire Safety Act 2021.

[A report](#) by the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group in March 2021 found that

"Personalised letters had the most positive impact on residents' knowledge, understanding and recollection of fire safety measures in the home, regardless of their stated preference of communication method"

Information that we provide to residents of high risk and complex buildings will inform them:

- about the safety of their building and we will comply with mandatory requirements to provide this
- of our complaints procedures so that if we fail to comply, they can access the complaints procedure easily; this demonstrates our commitment to transparency and openness. Residents can hold their Accountable Persons to account as each Principal Accountable Person will be required to operate a complaints system. Where complaints cannot be resolved, they can be heard by the regulator.
- that there are new duties on residents requiring them to play a significant part in the safety of their building. There are three clear obligations on residents:
 - that they must not act in a way that creates a significant risk of a building safety risk materialising
 - they must not interfere with or damage a "relevant safety item" (which is defined as anything forming common parts that is intended to improve building safety)
 - to comply with an accountable person's request for information that is reasonably required to enable them to perform their duties

We will also inform residents that under the Building Safety Act, to ensure the safety of all residents, our Accountable Persons have been given the power to ensure compliance with these obligations.

If a resident does not meet their obligations, the Accountable Person can issue a contravention notice. An accountable person may also require access to a residents' premises, strictly to fulfil their duties relating to building safety or to determine whether a residents' duty has been contravened.

Our Accountable Persons will be proportionate in ensuring residents' compliance with their duties. However, if a resident does not agree with the Accountable Person's use of a contravention notice or request for access they can refuse to comply.

If the Accountable Person applies to the County Court, the resident will be able to set out their position to an independent judge. They are also able to formally raise an issue concerning the Accountable Person's actions through the Accountable Person's complaints process and escalate it to the Building Safety Regulator.

In line with best practice, a personal letter will be sent to all properties within our high rise and complex buildings containing all of the above information.



In addition, we will produce **fire safety cards**, similar to flight safety cards given to passengers in aeroplanes as an integral part of the Building Safety Information Packs issued to residents.

These cards will use simple infographics to highlight key elements of fire safety both in the home and in communal areas. They will be given to **all** new tenants as part of their new tenancy sign-up pack and sent to all residents (tenants and leaseholders) **annually** as part of our commitments in our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) living in communal and shared buildings in the Borough.

We will co-design these with our residents and produce them in the most commonly used languages.

The [report](#) by the Social Sector (Building Safety) Engagement Best Practice Group used these graphics as part of its project and we will use this as a template to develop a Hillingdon version with our residents.



We will also produce one for communal areas and place these on noticeboards as constant, visual reminders to residents of how to prevent fires and how to react in the event of a fire.

There is also extensive information available from the [London Fire Brigade](#) which we will share with our residents including a [home fire safety guide](#) and an [escape plan for blocks of flats](#)

The website also contains information about [latest incidents](#) and other activities by LFB within the Hillingdon Borough.

We will share links to the LFB website with our residents.

Decisions that we will consult on

We recognise that residents do not want to be consulted on every decision and would rather be consulted on decisions that are relevant to them. We will target our consultation to achieve this and ensure that it is residents living in our high rise and complex buildings that are engaging with us through this strategy.

We are committed to increasing engagement in these properties through our Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) and will not use other engaged residents as substitutes for this authentic customer voice. It is obvious that other residents will not understand the experiences of living in these specific types of [high rise] properties, therefore cannot genuinely represent this segment of our residents.

Residents will be involved at every phase of our decision-making processes on the services that we provide to these properties and to do this we will seek feedback at every stage of the customer journey. This will help us to gain a better understanding of where we need to direct our resources and attention. We will:

- implement more transactional surveys
- conduct more frequent consultations with residents
- use feedback and engagement activities as information gathering opportunities and not just box-ticking exercises

How residents' views will be heard

Following our general tenant and leaseholder engagement strategy, we will take account of the views of or residents in our high rise and complex buildings, as follows:

- Methods will be resident-led with their preferences laying the foundations for our approaches, but we will aim to be modern, agile and responsive to meet their needs
- We will incorporate methods such as:
 - in person meetings with key staff

- residents' associations
- estate walkabouts
- digital participation e.g. social media, customer feedback
- estate or block surgeries
- estate or block champions
- environmental projects such as Better Neighbourhoods
- We will gather residents' views using social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter
- We will provide translation and other accessibility services on request

How we will measure the appropriateness of our consultation

Progress will be measured by monitoring and evaluating:

- residents' understanding of the ways they can take part and influence decisions
- the support and resources provided for residents to take part, and
- resident satisfaction with services provided by survey results

The Cabinet Member will receive an annual report for this three-year strategy for engagement which will provide an update on the implementation of these recommendations, further actions, and continued direction of travel, supported by the latest data on resident engagement and feedback. This annual report will also include an assessment of the impact that the Hillingdon Engagement Charter (HEC) is making in the Borough to improve engagement between residents and the Council. Our annual report will include detailed information about our engagement with residents living in high rise and complex buildings.

Appendix 3 - Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan 2023/24 to 2025/26

This Action Plan is not exhaustive and will be regularly reviewed and updated in line with the delivery timescales.

Item	Action	Lead	Timescale
1	Develop a Draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy and High Risk and complex Building Strategy to cover 2022-2025	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1
2	Consult on the draft tenant and leaseholder engagement strategies to provide an opportunity to inform and influence the strategy.	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1
3	Seek approval to launch both Strategies	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1
4	As part of the digital offer, develop a resident engagement webpage that will provide easy access to information on various engagement activities and how to get involved.	Customer Engagement Team and Corporate Communications Team	Year 1
5	Develop menu of engagement options to listen to resident feedback, which will show us the direction of travel and where improvements should be made	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1
6	Work alongside partners and other Council services to deliver 'Community Engagement Days' to ensure a coordinated approach to wider resident engagement	Customer Engagement Team and partners	Year 2
7	Attend TRA meetings as and when required	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1, 2 and 3
8	Deliver Sheltered Housing Forum meetings -quarterly	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1, 2 and 3
9	Delivery Older People's Assembly - quarterly	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1, 2 and 3
10	Deliver Assembly for People with Disability - quarterly	Customer Engagement Team	Year 2, 3
11	Deliver 2 X Carers Forum meetings in partnership with Hillingdon Carers Trust	Customer Engagement Team and Carers Trust	Year 1, 2
12	Refresh purpose and objectives of the Housing Forum Meetings (Senate)	Customer Engagement Team and residents	Year 2
13	Provide annual report on engagement activities to Select Committee	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1, 2 and 3
14	Ensure engagement and involvement is accessible and inclusive, providing support for underrepresented groups.	Customer Engagement Team	Year 1, 2 and 3

15	Capacity building for residents who wish to get involved. Various training provided.	Customer Engagement Team and other partner organisations (BUILD, Learn Hillingdon)	Year 2
16	Use a range of communication methods, including digital participation to communicate with residents	Customer Engagement Team and Corporate Communications Team	Year 1, 2 and 3
17	Recruit tower block champions for each block to work closely with officers across various housing services to regularly provide feedback that would support estate service delivery.	Customer Engagement Team and Tenancy Management Officers	Year 2
18	Ensure each tower block has a noticeboard that would be updated with relevant information pertaining to safety within and around the tower block environment	Customer Engagement Team and Tenancy Management Officers	Year 1
19	Conduct <i>Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)</i> survey	Customer Engagement Team	Year 2
20	Develop and support a resident led scrutiny process to challenge our services and recommend improvement	Customer Engagement Team, Housing Service Teams, Residents and other stakeholders	Year 3
21	Develop individual action plans for each tower block that would address issues specific to the block. This will be delivered alongside the High Risk and complex Building	Customer Engagement Team and Tenancy Management Officers, Caretaking Team, ASB, London Fire Brigade, Met Police	Year 2
22	Deliver 'Stay Safe at Home' sessions for residents living in tower blocks	Customer Engagement Team and Tenancy Management Officers, Caretaking Team, ASB, London Fire Brigade, Met Police	Year 1, 2
23	Carry out tenancy visits focusing on building safety. This activity also informs any changes to the Premises Information Box (PIB) box located in every tower block	Tenancy Management Officers	Year 1,2,3
24	Increase digital inclusion by working with local services to provide support to residents who may be struggling with accessing the digital space.	Customer Engagement Team, Libraries, Learn Hillingdon and other partners.	Year 2, 3
25	Co-produce and publish an Annual Report to let residents know how we are performing as a housing landlord.	Customer Engagement Team, Housing Service Managers and residents	Year 2

26	Undertake an analysis of lessons learnt from complaints including publishing reports.	Complaints Department and Customer Engagement Team	Year 2-3
27	Staff to keep abreast with legislation and expectation of the Social Housing Regulator. This can be done through self-study, networking, shared learning across residents' groups and other landlord providers.	Customer Engagement Team and Tenancy Management Officers	Year 1, 2 and 3
28	Both Strategies to be reviewed at the end of the three-year period.	Regulation and Engagement Manager	Year 3